

Zesde Interuniversitaire masterclass Religie en Cultuur Ancien Régime
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9-10u30 Sessie 1: Communicating female religiosity in the Ancient Regime

Session organizer:

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Communicating monastic identity. Female monasteries in ninth- to eleventh-century Saxony

According to previous scholarship female monastic institutions in the ninth- to eleventh-century West failed to live in accordance with normative prescriptions, imposed during the Carolingian reform movement, as a consequence of which historians characterized female monasticism in this period as chaotically diverse. As recent research nuanced the homogenizing intentions of the normative rules, there are new research opportunities to re-evaluate female monasticism's 'ambiguous' identity. By relying on evidence originating from female monasteries in Saxony in the ninth to eleventh centuries, this paper will seek to address how women religious negotiated and communicated a corporate identity that was credible to both the own community as the outer society.

Andra-Nicoleta Alexiu

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Diversitas Religionum. Zur Grundlegung eines Europäischen Diskurses religiöser Diversität im 13. Jahrhundert'

The last three decades have witnessed a growing interest in the phenomenon of communication in the Middle Ages. Within the confines of this vast field of research, the monastic world has become a privileged subject, with scholars attempting to clarify not only what the idea of 'communicating' meant in itself, but also how the concepts of public, private or that of 'space of communication' can be defined. In contrast to this increasing popularity, works focused on the religious communication of women are still somewhat underrepresented; in spite of this fact, one cannot overlook a rather new direction of research which places its interest in the social dimension of communication. Drawing on this new direction of study, my paper would like to insist upon another aspect of communication that was not as extensively scrutinized, namely the reception of women's utterances. Hildegard of Bingen is, in my opinion, one of the few fortunate cases that can offer us valuable sources on the ways in which women's messages were received either by their contemporaries or by future generations. Therefore, I think that revisiting Hildegard's *Epistolarium* or the prologue of Gebeno of Eberbach's *Pentachronon* can provide further information on how women communicated not only with the Divine, but also with the world outside their cloister, a dialogue that did not necessarily always take place in the friendliest terms. I argue that a reevaluation of these sources can contribute to broadening our understanding of important categories within the field of medieval communication, such as that of 'public space(s)'.

Hannah Iterbeke

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*Reflections of Enclosure in the Image of the Hortus Conclusus: Sixteenth-Century Mixed Media
Enclosed Gardens as Visual Communicators*

Between the end of the fifteenth and the sixteenth century numerous religious orders restored their monastic way of life during a reform. These changes shaped the visual culture of religious communities. The much-favoured image of the *Hortus Conclusus*, for instance, reflects the concept of enclosure which is strongly emphasized in the statutes of reform of numerous convents. The *Hortus Conclusus* is also the theme of an exceptional type of reliquaries or devotional cabinets, which came into being in the Low Countries and Western Germany during this same period. These artefacts are known today as Enclosed Gardens or *Besloten Hofjes*. An Enclosed Garden consists of a wooden case in which a multitude of artefacts are set up against a background of silk fauna and flora (Fig. 1). Although these gardens were not solely favoured among religious women and men, in many instances, these cabinets were often made or commissioned by female religious communities. The largest and most famous collection of no less than seven of these *Hofjes* belongs to the *Onze-Lieve-Vrouw Gasthuiszusters* of Mechelen – a group of Augustinian hospital sisters – however there are other, less known examples of these Enclosed Gardens. Each of these cabinets are a unique expression of the spiritual 'horticulture' of their convent. The image of the Enclosed Garden not only reflects their spiritual desire to get in touch with a higher celestial reality, but it also mirrors their enclosed lifestyle. In this paper, I would like to reflect on the role of these mixed media Gardens within several religious communities and to what extent these objects could function as visual communicators of the idea of *clausura*.

11-12u30 Session 2: Communicating religion through the senses in the Ancient Regime

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A beginner's version of allegory: Hildegard of Bingen's allegorical form and prophetic mission

For Hildegard of Bingen, the preferred mode of communicating her moral and theological thought is allegory. She uses allegory not only in her vision books, but also regularly in her letters. By examining the form of the allegory and the hermeneutical discourse of both the vision books and the letters, I want to show that she uses a different kind of allegory in each, which are opposed to each other in origin and method. While in her vision books she develops a rationalised, abstracted kind of allegory that is grounded in an epistemological theory of metaphor, in her letters she chooses a form that matches the traditional hermeneutical discourse of hidden truth, a form associated with parables. As she herself says, this last form is a kind of knowledge that is suited for the general public. I will argue that this differentiation is a way to find a middle road between two concepts of what a visionary is: for Hildegard, a prophet is a philosopher who furthers revelation, while for most of her correspondents, she is someone who predicts the future and can tell you what to do. Lastly, I will ask the question of what this difference tells us about the vision books, and what it means for Hildegard's prophetic mission. If it is the vision books that contain not only the core of her teaching, but also its right form, then are we witnessing a case of failed communication when we know that these works were almost never read or copied, exactly because of their excessive demands on the readers?

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'The ineffable sweetness of his Passion': Communicating mysticism through the hagio-sensorium

The sensory aspects of medieval mysticism are an often-discussed topic. Central to the debate are the questions whether the sensory terms in which mystics describe their experiences should be understood as describing an inner or an outer experience, and whether the mysticism of women was experienced more bodily than that of men. I propose a new approach to shed new light on our understanding of the role of the senses in medieval spirituality by taking into account the concept of 'hagio-sensorium', introduced by Hans Henrik Lohfert Jørgensen (2016). This notion denotes the 'sacred senses' as well as the 'sensing of the sacred'. In the hagio-sensorium all five of the senses are involved at the same time, creating a multisensorial experience in which the senses interact and overlap. I argue that this concept is especially fruitful in understanding mystical performances that involved an audience, such as the bodily 'passion performances' of the thirteenth-century mystic Elsbeth of Spalbeek, recorded in writing by her hagiographer Philip of Clairvaux. The notion of hagio-sensorium allow us to

examine how the sensory experiences of both the mystic and the audience are communicated to the reader as one sacred experience.

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Vernacular devout songs of the Devotio Moderna and the formation of 'emotional communities'

Emotion and emotional discourse serve as 'an idiom for communicating' between members of a group, according to anthropologist Catherine Lutz. This communicative quality of emotion is central in the formation of what Barbara Rosenwein has called 'emotional communities': groups – for example religious communities such as monasteries - that share a system of feeling, which determines the valuation of emotions and the modes of emotional expression. In this paper, I will use these concepts to study vernacular songs that are part of the extensive (textual) heritage of the Devotio Moderna in the Low Countries. These often highly emotional songs are not only representations of the cultural 'formats' of emotions in which they were developed or used, but were agents in defining and establishing these formats as well. Song simultaneously creates and confirms the emotional community through the arousal of emotions and sensations in text and music. Central in the Devotio Moderna is the shared valuation of emotions and desires as 'channels' toward God. Devotional songs underline these emotional values and thereby confirm the twofold communicative role of emotion in religious communities: as a means toward the divine and as an agent in the formation and strengthening of the emotional community.

13u45-15u Keynote session

Chair: to be confirmed

13.45

Keynote speaker to be confirmed

14u40-15u

Maarten Bassens

On Vices and Virtues. An Inquiry into Bruegel's Representations of Religion

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Through archival research, iconographical analysis and/or the occasional retrieval of circumstantial evidence, scholars have in the past frequently tried to define the religious views of the artists in their focus. The obtained hypothesis was then taken as an indicator for the contextualization of the artist and his or her oeuvre. With the lack or fading of the necessary nuance over time, some of these rickety theories were too often over-interpreted resulting in misread or distort interpretations of artistic work.

Although the documentary evidence for a reconstruction of the personal devotion of Pieter Bruegel the Elder (ca. 1525-1569) is rather thin, much has yet been written about his religious views. Living in times of religious persecution, some academics maintain the idea that the painter hid his true beliefs behind a façade of Catholic decency. Recently, Nils Büttner published a brief synopsis of this still ongoing debate. The author, focusing on the Catholic side of the artist, hoped his text would be interpreted as a new “impulse to opening up new spheres for other interpretations dealing with the quest for Bruegel’s personally held religious beliefs.”

In August 2016, the Print Room of the Royal Library of Belgium and the KU Leuven (Faculty of Arts & Faculty of Theologie) started with the FINGERPRINT Project. This interdisciplinary project focuses on the corpus of the drawings and prints of Pieter Bruegel the Elder, and aims to use advanced digital imaging, statistical processing, laboratory analyses and the classical practices of art history to monitor and evaluate the different phases of the genesis of a print, from the unique preparatory drawing through proof impressions to later states and editions.

During this lecture, the first results of the project will be presented with specific attention to the challenge offered by Nils Büttner. The preparatory drawings of Bruegel’s *Luxuria* and *Justicia*, as well as the resulting prints have been thoroughly researched in the last couple of months. With the renewed attention for the technical skills of Bruegel we will try to shed new light on the personal beliefs of this artist.

15u-16u30: Session 3: Communications & transregional transfer in the Ancient Regime

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Flemish altarpieces adjusted to Swedish believers

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In the late Middle Ages, altarpieces played a crucial role in communicating Christianity. Altarpieces on the Old and New Testament not only contributed to the beauty and sacredness of the altar, they also had a major function in educating illiterate people and encourage their devotion. The details and narrative character of the reredoses representing the lives of the saints functioned as shining examples for the Christian believers. *The Passion of Christ* and *The Life of the Virgin* were the most depicted themes. Depictions of the lives of other saints were rather exceptional.

As a result of their popularity, Flemish altarpieces were exported abroad. Many of them found their way to Sweden: today thirty-eight Flemish reredoses still remain there. Twenty-six of them show *The Passion of Christ*, ten *The Life of the Virgin*, one *The Life of St. Anna* and one is an apostle altarpiece. Upon closer examination, four Flemish-Swedish altarpieces (Vaksala, Veckholm, Västerås III and Ytterselö) contain remarkable details: Swedish patronages arise in the iconography. Statues of St. Bovid and St. Eskil stand next to the Virgin in Ytterselö and local female saints are depicted on the wings of Vaksala. Their presence in Flemish artworks could suggest that the pieces were an order, especially made for these villages.

This paper wants to examine the adaptations made abroad in the reredoses iconography, with a focus on Sweden. The adjustments reflect the intense religious function of the altarpieces. By virtue of the recognisable themes, the local inhabitant was more likely to identify and relate to the divine and transcendent. In addition, I want to question whether these four altarpieces are indeed Flemish, since two of them, Västerås III and Ytterselö, don't contain any marks and are attributed to Brussels on stylistic grounds.

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Catholic refugees and the printing press in the Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai, 16th-17th

From c. 1560 onwards English, Irish and Scottish Catholics had to rely mainly upon continental presses for the supply of Catholic literature. Many of these English Catholic books were printed in the Ecclesiastical Province of Cambrai, encompassing the French-speaking regions of the Habsburg Low Countries. While some English printers/presses in Douai and Saint-Omer significantly contributed to this publishing program, almost all local printing houses were involved too. However, even if there has been a lot of research into English Catholic books printed on the continent, the impact of the transregional contacts between British Catholics and

local societies on the continent has rarely been fully acknowledged. Based on a new database of religious books published in the Cambrai region between 1559 and 1659 I will estimate the importance of English books for local printing offices and how the ties between British refugees and the local book world made possible the massive distribution of Catholic literature on the British Isles.

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Hearing the Voice of the North: Communication and Confessionalization of the Reformed Minority of Southern Flanders (1650-1750).

Over the past few decades, historians have increasingly incorporated communication as a key element in the confessionalization process of early modern Europe. As such, scholars have asserted that states and Churches were close allies in broadcasting religious messages, with mass communication playing a key role in uniting their subjects under one confessional banner. In spite of its historiographical dominance, the confessionalization paradigm has been criticized for being overly statist, as it suggests that the direct, top-down dissemination of religious beliefs was indispensable in the process of confession-building. The development of the Flemish Mount of Olives, an agglomerate of Protestant communities in the rural south of Flanders, provides a counteracting case: even though this minority only received indirect support from a foreign state and church, namely the Dutch Republic and its public Church, it still developed into a distinct confessional community at the heart of the Tridentine-inspired Habsburg Netherlands. By analyzing letters, ecclesiastical documents and other communicative source material, this paper will therefore aim to analyze the ways in which the communication from the Dutch Reformed Church influenced the gradual confession-building of this Protestant minority. I argue that while communication from the North did steer the minority in a definite confessional direction, the Flemish Mount of Olives habitually triggered a self-confessionalizing effort, in which the local habitus and communal traditions played the more key role in determining the design of the confessional identity and the devotional praxis.

17u-18u30 Session 4: Printing religion in the Ancient Regime

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Ine Kiekens

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The Appropriation of the Opera Omnia of the mystic John Tauler in 16th-century Catholic and Protestant Contexts.

In the 16th century a mystical renaissance could be observed in the Rhineland and Eastern part of the contemporary Netherlands. Being part of a general reform movement, it was the main purpose of the adepts of the Catholic faith to revive the prospering mystical spirituality of the Late Middle Ages. Especially under the impetus of the Cologne Charterhouse, impressive editions with the *opera omnia* of famous late-medieval mystics were created. With these editions, the editors aimed to display the prolific past of a mystical tradition of which they considered themselves the legitimate heirs.

In 1543, the first German *opera omnia* of the German mystic John Tauler (†1361), containing sermons and devout exercises, were published in Cologne. This edition constituted the basis for several reprints and adaptations. In 1565, a new Dutch version was created by an anonymous adaptor. This time, however, the *opera omnia* of Tauler were published from a Protestant perspective. In order to fit in this new confessional context, the edition was subjected to the so-called process of *Protestantization*: elements that did not correspond to the Protestant faith were eliminated and replaced by passages considered more suitable.

In my presentation I aim to shed light on this *Protestantization*. Through textual comparison I will examine how the adaptor created a Protestant version of the 1543-edition. This analysis will provide insight in how at the beginning of the schism between Catholicism and Protestantism, the teachings of Protestant thinkers were propagated via texts that were used for daily religious praxis. By doing this, it will become clear which themes were at the start of this new era already susceptible to be adapted to a Protestant context and which themes were less prone to this. This case study will enrich our knowledge of how official doctrines were communicated in mystical texts created for daily religious praxis and will constitute the basis for further research on this topic.

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Thomas Stapleton and his Promptuaria: Sermons against the 'Heretic' Queen

Stapleton combined controversial, doctrinal preaching with an emphasis on Christian ethics and *mores*. He accomplished this, however, with separate collections devoted exclusively to each” (Frymire, 2010, 417). Thomas Stapleton (1535-98) was an Elizabethan exile who became professor in Douai and Louvain. The reference in the quotation is to Stapleton’s *prompturia* (handbooks) which were destined to be a useful instrument for clergyman in preparing their sermons. The study of these sermons also

shows how Stapleton regarded the time in which he was living, and how he looked at other religious confessions, whether as possible interlocutors or simply as ‘enemies’ of the faith. Stapleton in several instances declares also his hatred for the ‘heretic’ Queen, Elizabeth I, and for the ‘anglo-calvinists’ in general. I will deal specifically with the sermons given on the 19th Sunday after Pentecost (Mt 22:1-14) and on Septuagesima Sunday (Mt 20:1-16), in which Stapleton particularly shows his resentment against the ‘heretic Queen’, evidently because of his deplorable fate as a religious refugee.

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A Female printer in Douai (16th-17th c.)

When considering the book world in the sixteenth and even seventeenth century Habsburg Low Countries, the first city that comes to mind is undoubtedly Antwerp. This prolific printing town dwarfed the others in numbers in the sixteenth century and continued to be a major printing town in the following century. Consequently, Antwerp has received a lot of scholarly attention. Recent research on the university town of Douai, however, has shown that this town developed its own fruitful publishing strategies for religious texts. Situated in a border region between France and the Habsburg Low Countries, it finally ended up in the north of present-day France. It attracted religious exiles from the British Isles, France and northern regions of the Low Countries and could turn its transregional position into a ‘golden age of printing’ in the first half of the seventeenth century.

Female printers have, just like less renowned printing towns, been regularly glossed over in favor of their male counterparts. Daughters and wives worked alongside their family members to further the interests of the family business. As widows that continued the printing house after the death of their husbands, women regularly appear in the colophons of early modern books, including those from Douai. A year after the foundation of the university in 1562, the first printer set up shop and the Douai printing scene would soon come to be dominated by a few families who managed to pass on their firm to next generations. By tracking one widow and her family through printed sources as well as archival material, this paper will show the importance of women in this system and hence, their contribution to the communication of religion.

Conference dinner for presenters and organizers – to be confirmed

Organization committee at KU Leuven

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